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clusions from the signs of the times with rigid strictness. It is an interesting study and admirably unfolded. A copious and helpful bibliography is added.

JOHN H. STINESS.

The Jacksonian Epoch. By CHARLES H. PECK. (New York: Harper and Brothers. 1899. Pp. viii, 472.)

THIS is a plainly told and interesting account of our politics from Jackson's victory at New Orleans in 1815 to the Democratic defeat in 1840. The public history of that quarter-century in the United States has so often been told, both generally and in minute detail, and has been lighted up by so much biographical industry, that it would be difficult indeed for anyone to change the distinct and probably permanent picture of it which we already possess. Conscious, no doubt, of this difficulty, Mr. Peck has sought an original treatment of the period, as a Jackson-Clay "epoch," in a separation of the careers and rivalry of the two leaders and of the causes with which they were concerned from the continuity and generality of our history. He has, besides, hit upon the device of an account of public events which shall be more biographical than history and more historical than biography. But the difficulty with this is obvious, that the result must likewise be less historical than history and less biographical than biography. Although it escapes one limitation of each, it does not reach the complete and artistic result of either. In the general method necessary to the treatment of a political epoch, personal details quite suitable for biography, but irrelevant and uncharacteristic for history, have a forced and distracting effect. The reader finds it a wrench to be suddenly carried from disquisition or narrative of an epochal character to genealogical particulars about a political leader. The author's faculty for writing history includes so much clearness and fairness, that it is not, perhaps, ungracious to express the hope that he will hereafter give us an important work written under no obligation to a theory the seeming novelty of which must be open to suspicion in so old, so very old, a field. Let us have biography or let us have history, each remaining itself, though calling upon the other for appropriate and subordinate help.

Mr. Peck is broad in sympathy and liberal in judgment. He scrupulously sums up the material facts; and if his conclusions need correction, his reader is helped to make it. He sketches Jackson, Clay, Calhoun, Van Buren and Benton in lifelike fashion; and he generously judges them all. Such generosity is, no doubt, essential to truth when one deals with the career of a man crowded by the exigencies of public life, amidst which the precarious and threatening inconsistencies of effective public opinion although they cannot always be resisted, must nevertheless be skillfully avoided, if there is to be that practical result by which alone statesmen are judged even at the bar of impartial history.

It is difficult, however, to agree with the author's comparative estimate of Jackson and Clay which, no doubt, is the *pièce de résistance* of his

work. He follows much too closely for the robust truth of history the academic and conventional traditions which have come to us from the cultivated classes of a half-century ago. He declares Jackson's "eminence" to be that of a "chance instrument"; while he puts Clay in the category of men who, if they had lived in other days or amid other surroundings, would, in place of the notable things they did do, have done other notable things. This class he illustrates with Shakespeare, Newton, Burke, Franklin and Hamilton. Surely there have been "mute inglorious" Newtons and Burkes and Hamiltons as well as Miltos. If the author's account of Jackson be correct, as we believe it to be, it is difficult to assent to the conclusion that his case differs from that of Clay in the certainty of his obscurity had his time and environment been different. We are told that his personality was "potent," his natural temper "terrible and overpowering" and his spirit one of "fearless independence"; that, in spite of wretched education, he gained influential standing as a lawyer and the "lion's share" of civil business—and this within the very first years of his manhood; that, as a commander, he had "appalling energy and celerity" and a "truly high order of combative military genius"; that, although his tactics were remiss for some time before the British landed below New Orleans, he nevertheless, when the danger was at hand, "filled the torpid populace with enthusiastic vigor" and won his famous victory by "his genius for combat"; that in political life he made "men of sagacity and ability" his "chief counsellors" and that "for the most part the policy he was compelled (why 'compelled' of Jackson more than of other political leaders?) to pursue deserves greater credit than belongs to that of the opposition"; that "he was in all things entirely direct and.... free from cant and pretension"; that "no one thought him venal and few thought he had any moral obliquity"; and that, during a long and conspicuous career, he induced "by his dreadful independence, directness and force.... a large majority of the people to believe that he fully understood what he was about and was sufficiently right in his course."

This comes tolerably near to the picture of a great man, an Agamemnon of democracy—even if his faults were great or barbarous. The author's own account of the campaign against the Bank would give Jackson a foremost place as a politician if not as a statesman; and his judgment in that famous struggle is sustained by the general approval in our day of the divorce of government from banking. The author might well have inferred—even if the trait had not again and again been obvious—that underneath Jackson's reckless and impassioned bearing there dwelt astuteness, a true persistence which accomplished the results of patience, and a highly correct power of observation. That all of his faculties would, in every other age or environment, have remained in commonplace mediocrity does not seem probable.

The description of Clay is accurate, with his charm and eloquence in democratic advocacy and his delightful and sometimes exalted sentiment. The author on the other hand points out, and quite as clearly,

the absence, at least during the Jackson-Clay epoch, of the far-seeing and firm policy, and the adhesion to some sound principle, intellectual or moral, which belongs of right to every statesman of the first rank. We are shown Clay's faults in his treatment of critical matters. Mr. Peck declares the attack upon Jackson's Florida campaign to have been "the most calamitous and far-reaching of Clay's political mistakes." Clay's defeat of the re-charter of the U. S. Bank in 1811 was, he tells us, "a serious misfortune to the country," which Clay "soon regretted," himself becoming the chief advocate of the later attempt at re-charter. The rejection by Clay and his associates of Van Buren's nomination to the Court of St. James is condemned as "an electioneering episode" advantageous only to the men and causes Clay opposed. Clay and Webster are pronounced responsible for the defeat of the re-charter of the Bank and the woes it brought their own party by their refusal to permit modifications in the bill which were approved by the Bank and acceptable to Jackson; and this refusal is declared to have been a political manoeuvre for which, when it failed, there was no excuse. Whatever greatness is to be accorded Clay, it is clear, belongs not to his career and achievements in the rivalry with Jackson, but rather to his services as the "great pacifier." In the Missouri Compromise, and thirty years later in the Compromise of 1850, "the leading principle of his statesmanship" was "to solve the present and urgent problem in a way to preserve and expand our nationality on the existing basis." What measure of greatness belongs to those services, upon which must rest his best permanent fame, is, however, a question hardly within the limits of the Jackson-Clay epoch.

In these days of busy men and many books, the absence of an index is just ground of complaint at least against the publisher of this work.

EDWARD M. SHEPARD.

The Life of Henry A. Wise of Virginia, 1806-1876. By his Grandson, the late BARTON H. WISE. (New York: The Macmillan Co. 1899. Pp. xiii, 434.)

THE life of Henry A. Wise is an admirable piece of work. It is done with affection, sympathetically, yet it is thoroughly judicial. The author, like his subject, loved their mother state Virginia, yet he speaks of her without provincialism.

Henry A. Wise was by long descent a Virginian—he was, as he put it, *intus et in cute* a Virginian. He went to Washington College in Pennsylvania, but studied law with Judge Henry St. George Tucker, at Winchester. He practised law at Nashville, Tennessee, but soon returned to settle down where he was born, on the so-called Eastern Shore of Virginia. In 1833, at the age of twenty-seven, he was elected to Congress from a district which included a number of old counties on both sides of the Chesapeake, and sat continuously for eleven years. He then resigned, to be sent as minister to Brazil. Then for ten years he practised law. Of the Virginia convention of 1850, which reformed the state constitu-